

Introducing . . .

COLUMBIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



Our Heritage...

In the late fall of 1828, the first classes of the Theological Seminary of South Carolina and Georgia began in the manse of the Presbyterian Church of Lexington, Georgia. A little more than a year later the Seminary moved to Columbia, South Carolina, where for 98 years through church division, war, reconstruction and depressions it prepared ministers for service to the Presbyterian Church in the Southeast and what was known as the "Old Southwest".

Columbia — as the Seminary came to be called — developed a distinctive theology, rooted in the word of God and shaped by the Westminster Confession. To Columbia the Church looked for the defense of the faith.

Founded "to light another light for the Gospel to the West," Columbia also was committed to the missionary enterprise of the Church — to the Western frontier (then in Alabama and Mississippi) and to the world. The students formed the Society for Missionary Inquiry in 1830, and that interest in missions was to mark Columbia.

Columbia provided the leadership in the development of the polity and program of the new Presbyterian Church in the U.S. Moderators, stated clerks, authors of key documents came from the faculty or the graduates of the Seminary.

In 1927, the Seminary moved from the Columbia campus carrying the name and the heritage to Decatur, Georgia, on the outskirts of Atlanta. Now located more nearly at the center of the constituency, the Seminary also was enriched by the church life, the educational center, and the tremendous growth of the Atlanta area.

As Atlanta and the Southeast have changed, so has the Seminary. Preparing ministers today is a new task, shaped by the changing mission of the church to an ever-changing world. And the Seminary seeks in today's dynamic New South to prepare ministers for the church of today and tomorrow.

From the heritage comes the seriousness about theology, the interest in mission, and the service to the organizational life of the church. All these are now addressed from the perspective of the heritage of the past and the challenge of the present.

Our Commitments...

Three basic commitments have marked and continue to mark Columbia Seminary's program.

The first commitment is to *Biblical authority*. Faculty members all affirm that the Bible is the word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. All our teaching and ministry grows out of this commitment. So we require serious study of the Old and New Testaments in the Hebrew and Greek. Theology and ethics are based on the Biblical ground. Student's preaching is measured by its faithfulness to the Biblical text. Our constant appeal is to the Scripture as it is attested to be the word of God by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit.

The second commitment is to *doctrinal fidelity*. Faculty members like all church officers, receive and adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as containing the system of doctrine taught in Scripture. All students study these standards and the Reformed theology which they represent. The great central beliefs of the Reformed tradition are in the center of our Seminary, as we seek to express them in terms that speak to people who live in today's world.

The third commitment is to *ecclesiastical loyalty*. Columbia Seminary was founded by the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia to provide leadership for the Presbyterian Church and its program. Our students study the polity of the church and the program of the General Assembly, synods and presbyteries. Our teaching and our ministry seek to be loyal to the Presbyterian Church, U.S., as it works out its life and program under the doctrinal standards, the authority of Scripture, and the lordship of Jesus Christ, the head of the church.

These basic commitments are fulfilled today in a different educational style than in an earlier time. Indoctrination leads too often to mere rote learning and to an uncreative and wooden ministry. Our style of teaching and community is one of openness. The Biblical witness, the Reformed doctrine, and the church's program are presented as vital options for today. Students are called to make their own commitment to them as ministers of the Gospel.

We believe that those who enter the service of Jesus Christ must do so out of a conviction which is their own. Only then can they be the effective ministers of our Lord that our church and our world need today. This Columbia Seminary seeks to help them to be.

OBJECTIVES

The program of Columbia Seminary seeks to lead students (1) to new and deeper theological and Biblical understandings, (2) to new and tested skills, and (3) to fuller and experienced commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ in his church.

UNDERSTANDINGS

Each student comes to know the languages and the thought forms of the Old and New Testaments and the methods of translation and interpretation appropriate to the Biblical materials. Even more, the student learns the content of Scripture — the history of God's dealing with His people and the response of the people of God as they interpreted their lives and times in the light of revelation and faith.

Each student learns the history of the Christian church from its beginnings to the present. What the church has done, how it has worshipped and governed itself, and what the church has thought, how it has understood Scripture and its own task and life, are alike presented.

Each student learns about and enters into the work of theology and ethics. How the interpretation of the faith has been done and needs to be done involves the student in understanding the Reformed faith and forging his or her own approach to it. How the Christian community has understood the making of decisions about individual and corporate life involves the student in understanding the principles of Christian ethics and in the formation of his or her own ethical decisions.

Each student learns the principles of communication in preaching and teaching, the nature of human individuals and groups for counseling and leadership, and the structure of church government and worship.

SKILLS

Ministry is *doing* informed by *understanding*. So Columbia seeks to develop student skills.

Some of these skills are in Biblical interpretation, theological reflection, the forming of ethical judgments. Others are in leading worship, preaching, teaching, counseling, moderating sessions, and organizing the work of the church.

Skills are sometimes developed on the campus, but more often they are developed in settings where the life of people in the church and in the world goes on. Preaching and teaching may be done in local church settings. Supervised ministry, a key educational emphasis at Columbia, sends students to hospitals and urban communities and for at least one summer to a local congregation to do ministry under careful guidance and thus develop skills.

STYLE

Seminary means "seed-bed" or "hot-house", and it is a place of forced — often painful — growth. That growth is in understandings and in skills — but most important it is in personal commitment to Jesus Christ. At Columbia the call of God is heard anew again and again and the meaning of that call for this person is increasingly realized.

Daily worship, small groups for prayer, concerned faculty advisers — these are the events and persons that serve to focus commitment on campus. Minister-supervisors, young people, sick people, worshipping people in the church also enhance commitment away from the campus.



TWIN CONCERNS

Columbia Seminary is concerned equally about *what* is learned — the content — and about *who* learns — the person.

All the courses and activities as a Seminary try to address these two concerns. Learning how to interpret the New Testament is the task of an exegesis class, but *who* is interpreting is also dealt with. Understanding the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the aim of a theology class, but *how* the Holy Spirit moves in a person is also a concern. The psychological understanding of the sick person and the skill of bedside ministry is dealt with in pastoral counseling class, but also *how* one feels and understands and relates is examined.

Who are you? What do you know?

How have you grown? What have you learned?

These pairs of questions are both asked at Columbia constantly.

COLUMBIA IN METROPOLITAN ATLANTA

Columbia Seminary is located in the most exciting metropolitan center in the South and perhaps even in the nation. Atlanta is an urban center with a rich diversity of business and culture.

Here all the problems and opportunities of a complex urban society can be observed and experienced. State capitol and city hall are just blocks apart. Five Points is the financial center of the Southeast. Automobile and aircraft plants as well as textiles and electronics factories dot the city or sprawl along the interstates. Housing projects, high-rise apartments, affluent suburbs, swinging apartment complexes are residential patterns. Art museum, symphony orchestra, Metropolitan Opera, theaters along with professional football, basketball, hockey and baseball vie for time and spectators.

Yet less than an hour away is the rural and small-town South with farms and cotton gins and general stores and a mill or two.

Atlanta is an educational center. Columbia is associated with Candler School of Theology of Emory University and the Interdenominational Theological Center, itself comprising seven theological schools for Blacks, in the Atlanta Theological Association. Georgia Tech, Georgia State, University of Georgia, Atlanta University Center, Emory University as well as Agnes Scott, Oglethorpe, Atlanta School of Art, with Columbia Seminary form the University Center in Georgia. Through these associations students and faculty have access to libraries, courses, and cultural events of a bewildering variety.

Atlanta has a rich church life. Presbyterian churches of all sizes and ministry-styles are here. And Columbia alumni or supporters are leaders in Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, and Episcopalian churches. Opportunities for worship and church participation as well as for learning are without compare. The headquarters of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. in Atlanta provides resources for teaching and learning.

The Urban Training Organization of Atlanta provides education in urban problems using Atlanta as its laboratory and workshop. The Georgia Association of Pastoral Care gives chaplaincy training in a variety of hospitals and other settings and counseling training through its centers in churches.





VARIETY AND DIVERSITY

The Columbia student body is a richly varied one. Men and women, young and mature, married and single, black and white, Americans and overseas visitors, Presbyterians and Baptists, Methodist, Church of God or Lutherans, those dramatically called and those still seeking God's will — all study, learn, live and worship together.

Out of this diversity, the Seminary seeks for a unity of life and purpose. Yet there is real concern for the unique needs and interests of the black student, the woman student, the non-Presbyterian, the overseas student, the person who has left a 10- or 20-year career to enter seminary.

Most of all we try to model in our Seminary life openness to others who are different — willingness to listen, to confront, to learn, to share concerns. For we at Columbia believe that the church of Jesus Christ is an incredibly varied and diverse reality striving to become His one body.





COLUMBIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
 DECATUR, GEORGIA 30031
 Vol. 68, No. 2 / February, 1974
 Eugene H. Tennis, Editor
 Published 7 times a year
 Jan., Feb., Apr., May, July, Oct., Nov.

